

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

4 October 1965

SUBJECT: De Gaulle, Europe, and NATO

SUMMARY AND EXPLANATION

The paragraphs which follow set forth the argument that the positions taken by De Gaulle in his 9 September press conference have brought him into direct conflict with the main stream of Free World development since the end of World War II. By his assertion of absolute independence for France, his determination to maximize French influence bilaterally, and his encouragement of nationalism everywhere, he threatens to render unworkable the multilateral system which has ordered much of the world's affairs and kept its relative peace for twenty years. At the center of the crisis he has now opened, however, are the interlocking questions of the future organization of Europe and its economic, political and military ties with the United States, and the paper contends that the outcome of the first question will determine the outcome of the second. It recalls the reasons which persuaded four US administrations to support the idea of a European union which no one member could dominate, concluding that the considerations which led President Kennedy to issue his "declaration of interdependence" remain compelling. Finally, the paper cautions against some of the hazards potentially involved in alternative arrangements--notably, the difficulty inherent in trying to maintain a system of bilateral commitments with and to individual European countries. The views expressed are entirely those of the writer and have no official endorsement. The writer has, however, followed the triumphs and tribulations of the European and Atlantic movements for more than ten years, and it is certain that those with similar interests will find his statement a vigorous and provocative one.

* * * * *

1. In the aftermath of De Gaulle's 9 September press conference, it seems to me the distressing aspects of it are not only what he has said with unusual clarity, but the obstacles he has placed in the path of an effective response. De Gaulle has made more explicit what has been implicit in his position all along: that he

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

means to assert and achieve for France absolute independence of action in that complex international organizational network which is one of the Free World's prize achievements since the end of the War. To the effective functioning of these institutions must go much of the credit for Western Europe's present prosperity; the promotion of world trade, mutual economic assistance, and monetary stability; and to a degree even, the achievement of the present relative measure of world peace. De Gaulle, however, has now said that unless France retrieves its freedom of action within this institutional network, he--for his part--is of a state of mind to begin France's withdrawal from it.

2. This is the essential meaning of De Gaulle's position, even though the current focus of De Gaulle's attack is most specifically the Common Market. It is, after all, the EEC which clearly cites as its goal a community of European peoples--not of states, and which has reached a stage in its development which restricts French sovereignty in important respects. Nor is it a contradiction that, in the past seven years, De Gaulle has more often than not contributed to the EEC's development--in today's constellation of powers, France by itself is some distance from the apex. Nor does it give cause for optimism that, since 9 September, his statements have been interpreted and moderated by his ministers. De Gaulle would scarcely expect to achieve all his objectives at once, he knows that his opposition is weakened if it is uncertain what it faces, and it will probably matter very little to him, for example, whether he recasts the EEC by formal amendment to its treaty or by common consent not to carry it out.

3. In any case, it is not the specifics of Gaullism which pose the problem for the Western system, but its generalities. It is the assertion of nationalism, the refusal to accept the degree of subordination of national independence which is required of all nation-states, the rejection of the 20th Century world of multilateralism, and the determination to maximize France's basically limited world influence through bilateral dealings so conducted that others will always be prepared to pay a heavy price for French consent.

4. France's European partners have been the victims of this "diplomacy" enough times that they are aware of its potentialities, and in many cases, no doubt, their stomachs are full. The egregious distortions of fact and

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

the exorbitant claims made for France in the 9 September conference caused outrage and anger--even in France. The great difficulty is, however, that De Gaulle has all the advantages of the malcontent. All the EEC's members, for example, have an enormous stake in its continuation, but five of them suspect the sixth is ready to risk more than they. The specific issues De Gaulle has raised, moreover, are ill-defined and hard to dramatize. Who is eager to do battle for a rule of procedure (majority voting) which in the foreseeable future is unlikely to be exercised--or for the right of initiative for a more or less remote bureaucracy (the EEC Commission) which is itself reaching for power?

5. It is also difficult to organize an effective defense when one believes the danger is something less than total--when giving on "form" may seem likely to save the "substance", and when, as some have observed, the actuarial tables suggest a possible solution even if nothing is done. Among the EEC members it is therefore attractive to think that if the institutions are sacrificed, then perhaps the "community"--whatever that might be--can be saved. Or, if De Gaulle's more or less legitimate demands for agricultural financing are met, then the customs union may survive. Or, even if the present line of the community's development is abandoned, there are other organizational means to preserve vital commercial, political, and military interests.

6. It is the thesis of this paper, however, that we are facing one crisis, the outcome of which will affect the entire Western system. At the center of this crisis are two, closely inter-related issues: what the shape of Europe will be for the remainder of the century, and what its relationship will be to the United States. It is further the thesis of this paper that the former determines the latter. This is, in fact, the way De Gaulle sees it: when he condemns integration in the EEC he condemns it as well in NATO; when he claims a federal Europe would be "subordinate" to Washington, there is no real doubt whose hegemony he means to have prevail; when he campaigns for a different kind of Common Market, he has in mind the political and military implications of the alternative; and finally, a "Europe to the Urals" is not likely to be arranged with a US presence at the negotiating table.

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

7. Like De Gaulle, the US too has recognized that the kind of working relationship we will have with Europe will depend on the kind of working relationships the Europeans effect among themselves. It is for this reason that four administrations have for twenty years supported European unity. By unity we have meant not only economic union, but also political and military union; and we have not been content merely to accept proposals for unions in all these respects--we have committed prestige and resources to achieving them. This is not to suggest, of course, that we have lent our support to all such proposals. We actively opposed Britain's free trade area plan because its potential commercial costs to us were so high and its potential contribution to political union so dubious. Above all, we have conditioned our support on adequate assurance that no European union would fall under the domination of any one of its members. This, rather than our own experience with federalism, accounts for our bias towards the European federalists. Indeed, when Adenauer's subordination of himself to De Gaulle threatened to secure for France a dominant role in the EEC, we actively campaigned for anti-federalist Britain's accession to forestall this.

8. This support for a European union-of-equals has persisted for two decades because one compelling reason for doing so has succeeded upon another. Initially, such a union seemed the best way to maintain the peace in Western Europe and to restore Germany to constructive membership in European society. As fear of Germany subsided, unity appeared as an essential ingredient to European economic recovery. Subsequently, unity seemed an important element in organizing an effective defense against the USSR. Ultimately we saw in European union a way to achieve a permanent, cooperative arrangement between the US and Europe in which the economic growth and technological progress of both would be sustained and in which an increasingly self-reliant European "partner" could assume a larger responsibility for its own defense and make a bigger contribution in support of the burden borne by the US elsewhere in the world.

9. Most of the reasons of the past which activated our support for effective European union and all of them which led President Kennedy to make his "declaration of interdependence" seem to me equally compelling now. It could not be expected, for example, that a Gaullist corruption of the Common Market would mean the disappearance

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

of the community--but it would be less viable, less vital, and above all, different. The EEC's decision-making processes are cumbersome enough as they are now--they would be ponderous if the effective representation of the community interest by the Commission were eliminated. If we are now concerned with protectionist tendencies in the EEC, there would be far greater cause for concern for its orientation if it falls under the established hegemony of France. For political as well as economic reasons it could be expected that such a community would be sympathetic to the further extension of preferential ties with its friends and neighbors. In short, we might well be confronted by the economic monstrosity we have always feared: an inward-looking and unresponsive community in which, for example, De Gaulle's quaint views on international payments and finance might even prevail.

10. Nor could it necessarily be expected that this monstrosity would be lacking in political and military significance. De Gaulle's efforts since 1960 to wheedle the Five into some formalized arrangement to coordinate economic, political, and military policies aborted on the Five's unwillingness to subordinate the EEC to a purely intergovernmental body, their suspicions that such a body would become the vehicle for the advancement of De Gaulle's foreign policy views, and their fear that an "inner grouping" of this type would weaken the supremacy of NATO in defense. Although this so-called "Fouchet plan" has been derailed since 1962, we cannot be sure that De Gaulle will not revive it, nor is it certain that the Five, too cowed by De Gaulle to defend the EEC treaty, would continue to resist. In fact, it has often been Erhard's idea of a "compromise" to give the French what they want by way of agricultural integration in return for De Gaulle's willingness to discuss the very kind of political-military organization the General has seemed always to wish.

11. It is unnecessary in any case to accept the validity of any of these projections to recognize the grave uncertainties which Western Europe would be facing if De Gaulle succeeds in eliminating the element of stability which even the dream of an effective union of equals has contributed since 1945. What kind of leadership would a hegemonial France give to Europe after De Gaulle? The "stability" that now prevails in France may not even survive the life of the man. Is it at all certain that France--by no means the most powerful European state--would necessarily be the leader of such

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

a Europe the day after tomorrow? Is it not De Gaulle's own uncertainty which accounts for his determination to deprive Bonn of access to nuclear weaponry--which in part also justifies in his eyes the force de frappe? Why should not so successful an assertion of nationalism be emulated by others? What guarantees are there that West Germany will accept an indefinite subordination to France, and if German youth cannot find their place in Western Europe, where will they turn? What guarantees of security against Germany can France offer the USSR that a frustrated Germany could not better offer itself? If not in Europe, where will Britain find its vocation? And finally, what basis is there for a US-European partnership in a policy which would end the two hegemonies by creating a third?

12. In short, it seems to me we are now facing two concepts of a state of Europe and of its relationship to the US that are very nearly at opposite poles. On the one hand, there exists already today an organization of Europe which has achieved an effective degree of economic unity--which holds considerable promise of achieving tomorrow a more general union of Europe. The kind of Europe which is here evolving would, because of its institutions, assure its members against domination by any one of them, and because of its effective representation of all of its interests, would seem most likely to be outward-looking, responsible, and progressive. It would be a European union which could permit the US to effect in safety the reduction in our present commitments which our heavy responsibilities elsewhere has seemed to call for and which Europe's present and future capabilities would make feasible. On the other hand, there is a concept of European union which would be the instrument of France now, and perhaps of some other member later; which is activated by fear of Germany and animus against the US; which would forcibly exclude US influence from Europe; and which--one must suspect--would seek some accommodation with Moscow.

13. In my judgment, the vast majority of Europeans, if confronted with a clear choice between these two concepts of Europe, would not willingly accept the Gaullist one. In his 9 September press conference, De Gaulle came close to confronting his fellow Europeans with precisely that choice--and he may have made a mistake which his ministers are now attempting to rectify. Nevertheless, it seems to me a far lesser danger that Europe will

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

decisively reject twenty years of progress toward a true European union and Atlantic partnership than that the basic strength of this development will be permitted to erode. What the anti-Gaullists therefore need is not so much new policies, as a reaffirmation of the old, a new clarity of purpose, a technique for standing firm, and a willingness to accept the consequences.

14. The US role in this will obviously be critical, and without attempting in any way to suggest what that role should be, this paper does suggest that there are certain factual considerations and reasonably predictable consequences of particular courses of action which should perhaps be borne in mind. Among them are:

a. If De Gaulle is able this fall to dictate a "solution" to the EEC crisis on approximately his own terms, his hand will be enormously strengthened in dealing with the NATO crisis which will surely ensue. Flexibility is one of the attributes of De Gaulle's diplomacy when it is operating at its--superb--best: he uses a victory in one area to advance his aims in another; he accepts compromises in order to renew his original demand at a later and more critical time; and he tries to make what he wants in one area too costly to reject because of the consequences somewhere else. Thus, for example, he might be willing to leave the future of the EEC Commission in abeyance in the next few months only to raise it again next spring when the discussions of NATO are in full flow.

b. The Five are wavering uncertainly, there are elements both of strength and weakness in their positions, and it is unclear which will prevail. While De Gaulle would be quick to exploit an open US intervention, an effective coalition of the Five will almost certainly require an assurance of US sympathy.

c. Caution and even a degree of conciliation is not necessarily at odds with standing firm. On the one hand, no one knows to what lengths De Gaulle is prepared to go--nor on the other, does anyone know how long he may last.

d. It would be a very fine judgment whether the Kennedy Round would be more endangered by a show of firmness which led to French withdrawal from the Common Market, or, by concessions to De Gaulle which assured French pre-eminence in it.

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

e. Because of the imbalance of economic interests and the preponderant position West Germany would have, an EEC of the Five would not likely be a viable alternative to the Six. However, as a holding action designed to preserve the community's institutions pending its enlargement, this could be far more desirable from the point of view of US commercial and political interests than any hasty marriage of the Five and EFTA.

f. With or without a rupture of the Common Market, the unresolved question of Britain's role in Europe becomes more pressing every day. Gaullism--in some of its aspects --has had its advocates in London, and there is the risk that Britain's entry into Europe might be achieved at the expense of the community system.

g. The Gaullists have in the past exploited the hopes for European union by alleging that it is the US intention to "dissolve" that union in a larger Atlantic grouping. The term "Atlantic community", the free trade area aspects of the Trade Expansion Act, and the MLF were all so exploited, and any new moves to secure our Atlantic objectives--commercial, monetary, political, and military --which did not take adequately into account the phenomenon of "European nationalism" would involve that risk.

h. Similarly, US moves to secure its objectives in Europe through bilateral agreements with individual European states must take into account the effect these could have in aggravating national rivalries, involving us in them more directly, and in committing us too strongly to supporting the national objectives of our key partners.

i. In all of this the key issue is equality, and perhaps, balance. De Gaulle's greatest handicap in trying to organize his alternative concert of European states has been his manifest unwillingness to permit Germany (and the UK) to participate in it on equal terms. If, in rejecting NATO, De Gaulle forces the US to embrace West Germany--already Western Europe's most powerful state, there is grave doubt that the resulting imbalance would be acceptable to the rest of the Alliance.

SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION